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STATE FOR NEA/ARN, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA, B/BXN,
B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON SADDAM TRIAL

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

-- "THE OCCUPIERS ARE NOT FAIR JUDGES, BUT INVADERS AND AGGRESSORS"

FORMER MINISTER OF INFORMATION NASSOUH AL-MAJALI WRITES ON THE OP-ED PAGE OF SEMI-OFFICIAL, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AL-RAI (11/07): "IT IS A BLACK DAY WHEN A DEATH SENTENCE IS ISSUED AGAINST AN ARAB PRESIDENT WHO SITS IN AN AMERICAN PRISON AND WHO IS SUBJECTED TO A TRIAL THAT LACKS ANY TRUE LEGALITY, MOTIVATED ONLY BY THE THIRST FOR REVENGE THAT TYPIFIES OCCUPIERS AND THEIR TOOLS. THE DEATH SENTENCE WAS PRE-ARRANGED THROUGH POLITICAL STATEMENTS THAT URGE DEATH, AND ADMINISTRATIVE AND SECURITY MEASURES THAT PREEMPT IT. WE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO SEE SADDAM AND HIS FRIENDS TRIED BEFORE A REAL INTERNATIONAL COURT OR BY A FAIR COURT BELONGING TO A FREE GOVERNMENT, NOT UNDER OCCUPATION. WE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED NOT TO SEE THE LIVES OF SADDAM AND HIS FRIENDS TURN INTO A TRUMP CARD, AND ANOTHER FALSEHOOD IN THE LONG LIST OF LIES BY THE NEO-CONSERVATIVES.

THOSE WHO OVERTHREW THE REGIME IN IRAQ ARE CAPABLE OF OVERTHROWING ANY OTHER ARAB REGIME THROUGH THE SAME PROCESS OF FALSIFYING FACTS. THE LESSON IS THERE FOR WHOEVER WISHES TO LEARN IT, BECAUSE THE OCCUPIERS ARE NOT FAIR JUDGES, BUT INVADERS AND AGGRESSORS."

-- 'THE TRIAL OF SADDAM'

DAILY COLUMNIST ORAIB AL-RANTAWI WRITES ON THE OP-ED PAGE OF CENTER-LEFT, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AD-DUSTOUR (11/07): "IN THE FRONT ROW OF THE DEFENDANTS CAGE WE SHOULD HAVE SEEN U.S. PRESIDENT BUSH, BRITISH PRIME MINISTER BLAIR, AND BEHIND THEM BREMER, KHALILZAD, NEGROPONTE, ALONG WITH THE LEADERS OF THE IRAQI MILITIAS FROM THEN BADR BRIGADES AND THE PASHMARGA TO ABU AYYOUB AL-MASRI, THE SUCCESSOR OF AL-ZARQAWI. ALL THESE PEOPLE KILLED MORE INNOCENT IRAQIS THAN THE TYRANT IN THE DEFENDANT'S CAGE. THEY HAVE ALL COMMITTED CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY AND THEY SHOULD NOT GET AWAY WITH THEM. A MILLION IRAQIS HAVE BEEN KILLED SINCE THE 'WAR OF LIBERATION' AND 3 MILLION HAVE BEEN MADE HOMELESS. SADDAM HUSSEIN DESERVED THE DEATH SENTENCE FOR KILLING 148 PEOPLE FROM AL-DUJAYL, SO WHAT SENTENCE SHOULD BE METED ON THE HEROES OF ABU GHRAIB, THOSE WHO DESTROYED FALLUJAH ON ITS INHABITANTS? WHICH SENTENCE SHOULD BE METED ON BLAIR'S OFFICERS AND MEN WHO RAPE THE OMEN OF BASRA? WHICH SENTENCE SHOULD BE METED ON THIS UNHOLY ALLIANCE OF MURDERERS AND WAR CRIMINALS?"

-- "A FREE AND JUST JUDICIARY"

DAILY COLUMNIST SAMIH MAITAH WRITES ON THE BACK-PAGE OF INDEPENDENT, CENTRIST ARABIC DAILY AL-GHAD (11/06): "THE MAIN ISSUE DOES NOT LIE IN SADDAM'S DEATH, OR HIS IMPRISONMENT, OR HIS RELEASE. THE MAIN

ISSUE IS THE IRAQI PEOPLE WHOM AMERICA PUSHED, THROUGH THE OCCUPATION, INTO A LARGE PRISON, RAMPANT WITH MICROPHONES AND PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANIES FOR THE SO-CALLED GREEN ZONE, AND THE MAIN NEWS ITEM ABOUT IRAQ EVERY MORNING HAS BECOME ABOUT KILLINGS AND VICTIMS. IF THE PUNISHMENT OF SADDAM AND HIS PEOPLE MEANS THE END OF KILLING IN IRAQ, THEN WE MUST ALL REJOICE. BUT IF IT IS A MATTER OF VENGEANCE AGAINST A NEIGHBORING REVOLUTIONARY COUNTRY, OR AN ELECTION CARD FOR BUSH WHOSE ARMY IS SUFFERING IN IRAQ, OR A COVER UP FOR THE FAILURE OF A NEW REGIME, THEN THE DEATH OR IMPRISONMENT OF MEN OF THE FORMER REGIME IS NOT MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ, THE DESTRUCTION OF THIS ARAB STATE, AND THE SHEDDING OF THE BLOOD OF ALL ITS PEOPLE."

-- "SADDAM'S EXECUTION"

DAILY COLUMNIST JAMIL NIMRI WRITES ON THE BACK-PAGE OF INDEPENDENT, CENTRIST ARABIC DAILY AL-GHAD (11/06): "WHAT EASES THE EFFECT OF SADDAM'S DEATH SENTENCE IS THE FACT THAT THERE IS AN APPEALS DECISION. WE ARE NOT YET IN THE FINAL STAGE. THERE IS GOING TO BE A DEEP DIVISION AS TO THE CORRECT DECISION ABOUT SADDAM; AFTER ALL, HIS EXECUTION IS A PROBLEM AND HIS SURVIVAL IS ALSO A PROBLEM. BUT EVERYTHING RELATED TO THIS TRIAL IS PART OF THE SERIES OF MISTAKES, STARTING WITH THE ORIGINAL SIN OF THE DECISION BY THE ADOLESCENT GANG OF NEO-CONSERVATIVES TO INVADE IRAQ.... THE IRAQI PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO TRY A FORMER REGIME FOR ITS EXERCISE OF WHAT COULD BE CLASSIFIED AS CRIMES AGAINST CITIZENS OR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY. THE SCENE WOULD HAVE BEEN CATEGORICALLY DIFFERENT HAD THIS HAPPENED UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES, UNDER A FREE REGIME AND THE RULE OF LAW AND PUBLIC ORDER.... IN SHORT, HORRIBLE TRAGEDIES AND TRANSGRESSIONS OCCURRED IN SADDAM'S ERA, WHICH JUSTIFIES THE TRIAL OF THE REGIME AND ITS SYMBOLS AND THE ISSUANCE OF THE DEATH SENTENCE. YET, AMERICAS STORY WITH IRAQ, WITH THIS MOST HORRIBLE AND TERRIFYING REALITY ON THE GROUND, HAS MADE THIS TRIAL A JOKE AND ITS OUTCOMES AN ADDITIONAL PROBLEM AND NOT A SOLUTION."

-- "BREAKING NEWS"

CHIEF EDITOR TAHER ODWAN WRITES ON THE BACK-PAGE OF INDEPENDENT, MASS-APPEAL ARABIC DAILY AL-ARAB AL-YAWM (11/06): "YESTERDAY WAS A MAJOR BREAKING NEWS DAY FOR THE AMERICAN MEDIA OUTLETS, DESPITE THE WHITE HOUSE'S DENIAL OF ANY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TIMING OF THE VERDICTS IN BAGHDAD AND THE CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES.... WE WILL SEE THE EXTENT OF THE REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATIONS SUCCESS OR FAILURE IN THIS CHARADE OF VERDICTS TO SALVAGE THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES IN THE ELECTIONS. YET, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE ONLY VICTORY THAT BUSH HAS IN IRAQ IS THE CAPTURE OF THE IRAQI PRESIDENT, PUTTING HIM ON TRIAL AND FINALLY SENTENCING HIM TO DEATH. OTHER THAN THAT, THERE IS NOTHING BUT THE QUAGMIRE OF DEFEAT THAT WILL HAUNT BUSH AND THE REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATION UNTIL WHEN. IRAQ IS AN OCCUPIED COUNTRY. THIS IS THE ONLY AND THE BITTER TRUTH ... THAT SLAPS IN THE FACE ANYONE WHO GLOATS ABOUT THE VERDICT'S JUSTICE AND THE LEGITIMACY OF THE COURT. AFTER ALL, THE TRIAL DID NOT TAKE PLACE IN AL-DUJAYL, THE VILLAGE CONCERNED, BUT IN THE GREEN ZONE AND UNDER THE SPEARS OF THE AMERICANS.... WE DO NOT KNOW IF JUSTICE WILL TAKE ITS COURSE ONE OF THE DAYS ON THE BASIS OF A COMPARISON BETWEEN A PRESIDENT WHO IS TO BE EXECUTED BECAUSE HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KILLING OF 148 IRAQI 22 YEARS AGO AND AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON THE ONE HAND, AND A WAR ADMINISTRATION OR AN INVASION DECISION THAT LED TO THE KILLING OF MORE THAN HALF A MILLION IRAQIS AMIDST THE OBJECTIONS OF ALL HUMANITY AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY."

-- "THE FARCE TRIAL"

DAILY COLUMNIST BASEM SAKIJHA WRITES ON THE OP-ED PAGE OF CENTER-LEFT, INFLUENTIAL ARABIC DAILY AD-DUSTOUR (11/06): "EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED IN THE TRIAL OF SADDAM HUSSEIN FORCES US TO COMPARE IT TO A FARCE. SINCE THE BEGINNING, THE DEFENSE WAS PREVENTED FROM DEFENDING, THE JUDGE WAS REMOVED BECAUSE HE IS NEUTRAL, THE PROSECUTION WAS PROVOKED OVER EVERY LITTLE THING, AND THE IMPLICIT-EXPLICIT AMERICAN PRESENCE WAS INVOLVED IN EVERY LITTLE DETAIL.... THE COURT, FROM BEGINNING TO END, WAS A MIRROR REFLECTING THE IMAGE OF THE NEW IRAQ. THERE IS AN OCCUPATION THAT RUNS MATTERS, ALLIES FOR IT THAT DO ITS BIDDING, AND PEOPLE IN THE CAGE AWAITING THE VERDICT. TO SAY THAT THE IRAQI PEOPLE TRIED SADDAM HUSSEIN IS NOT TRUE AT ALL. THE OCCUPATION IS THE ONE THAT TRIED HIM AND IT IS THE ONE THAT SENTENCED HIM. IN THE FUTURE, THE

IRAQI PEOPLE WILL COME TO STUDY THE VERDICT AGAINST SADDAM. THE PARTY THAT TRIED SADDAM ON CHARGES OF CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY IS THE PARTY THAT IS COMMITTING THESE CRIMES TODAY. NO ONE CAN BE CONVINCED THAT THE ADVERSARY COULD EVER BE A JUDGE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. HAD THE CHANGE IN THE REGIME BEEN NATURAL AND HAD THE JUDGES AGAINST SADDAM HUSSEIN BEEN IRAQI, WE WOULD HAVE CONCLUDED A DIFFERENT RESULT. BUT THE SENTENCING OF THE OCCUPATION CAN NEVER ACHIEVE JUSTICE."

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